

# **Will Policing in California Communities Be Outsourced to CCTV?**

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September 2009

Command College Class 45

The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College Futures Project and journal article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

## **Will Policing in California Communities Be Outsourced to CCTV?**

In the 1930s, it was the radio, the 1980s it was the computer, and in the 1990s, it was DNA. With the rising costs of law enforcement labor, the economic downturn, and the state's unique budget challenges, technology may be called upon not only to supplement, but to possibly replace a number of California peace officers. Closed circuit television (CCTV) may be that technology that bridges the financial gap between the law enforcement mission and diminishing resources.

California law enforcement faces daunting economic challenges. Needed changes are sometimes only brought about by a crisis. Technologies such as CCTV, that were only used on a limited basis, or completely discarded, may now be called upon as an innovation to overcome the challenges. Law enforcement jobs in the near future may become outsourced to technology for better efficiency and cost savings. Automation in the workforce is nothing new, especially in the manufacturing sector. In fact, the use of technology to do mundane and dangerous jobs goes back many decades.

### **CCTV – A Short History**

The first use of CCTV dates back to 1942 when the German military used crude black and white CCTV technology to safely observe the test firing of V-2 rockets.<sup>1</sup> The camera was used as a research tool to closely watch any structural defects during take-offs. The US military continued to use the cameras in the same way for the confiscated

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<sup>1</sup> Directory M Articles. "Closed Circuit Television," [Internet online] [http://articles.directorym.com/Closed\\_Circuit\\_Television-a508.html#64688](http://articles.directorym.com/Closed_Circuit_Television-a508.html#64688).

rockets after World War II.<sup>2</sup> The first cameras deployed for crowd security were used in the United Kingdom (UK) for Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953; by the 1960s, they were permanently deployed in crowded public places to assist in the deterrence and apprehension of crime.<sup>3</sup> The British cameras were incorporated into public safety operations with little public discussion because of the Irish Republican Guard crisis in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>4</sup>

### **The British Experience**

The UK continues to use CCTV for everyday law enforcement needs, and is now also accessing private security digital camera systems. This information from private businesses is centralized with the information from government run cameras from schools, traffic thoroughfares, and police security cameras already operating in all corners of the nation. The centralized computer system is used by law enforcement and the domestic national security agency, MI-5. London Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Bob Waites, in charge of Operational Communication and Information Command, claims the use of shared video information can help to quickly solve major crimes, such as the Cronulla Riots of 2005.<sup>15</sup>

The prolific use of security cameras in the UK, totaling more than 4.2 million CCTV units (or one camera for every 14 residents), results in the average person being

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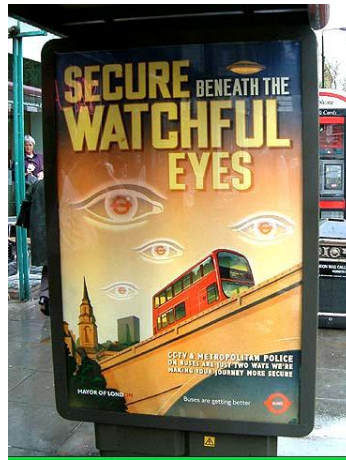
<sup>2</sup> Security Alpha Card. "History of CCTV," [Internet online] <http://www.alphacardsecurity.com/cctv/history.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> BBC News. "How we are being watched," [Internet online] [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/6110866.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6110866.stm).

<sup>4</sup> USA Today. "New York plans London-style camera network," [Internet online] [http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/surveillance/2007-07-11-nyc-surveillance-cameras\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/surveillance/2007-07-11-nyc-surveillance-cameras_N.htm).

<sup>15</sup> Brown, Ben. "CCTV in Town Centers: Three Case Studies, Police Research Group Crime Detention and Prevention Series, Paper 68 1995.

video recorded about 300 times a day.<sup>16</sup> The newest of the camera technology is being used in East London where camera operators issue warnings over speakers for antisocial



*(CCTV warning sign at a bus station in London)*

behaviors such as littering or a disturbance, or radio information to responding field officers.<sup>17</sup> UK policy makers continue to believe the cameras are effective in optimizing law enforcement resources.

The British Home Office Police Research group released a study in 1995 about the effectiveness of CCTV systems in the town centers of Newcastle, Birmingham, and King's Lynn. The study showed that:

1. Personnel efficiency: CCTV eliminates the need for officers to patrol areas that are under continuous observation. The cameras can also spot crimes that are about to occur, or if they did occur, the information can be used to coordinate the responding officers.

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<sup>16</sup> Ballot Pedia. "Barstow sales tax increase, Measure D, 2008," [Internet online] [http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Barstow\\_sales\\_tax\\_increase](http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Barstow_sales_tax_increase)

<sup>17</sup> Welsh, Brandon C. and Farrington, David P. "Crime prevention effects of closed circuit television: a systematic review." *Home Office Research Study 252* [Internet online] <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors252.pdf>.

2. Investigative aid: CCTV assists in the identification of violators and can give clues to investigations.
3. Deterrent effects: CCTV cameras can intimidate criminals. In Newcastle commercial and residential burglaries fell by 56%, vandalism fell by 34%, and auto burglaries fell by 11% in a 15-month period.

The policing mission in Britain is very much like that in the United States. Both nations have similar principles of representative government, individual freedoms, and embrace technology. These basic commonalities may allow us to utilize their CCTV successes in optimizing our law enforcement resources to their fullest, especially during times of economic crises.

### **The American Experience**

In America, CCTV has been used differently; they were unmanned, passive tools to provide additional building security.<sup>5</sup> The New York City Police Department (NYPD) first deployed the CCTVs in a municipal building in 1969, and slowly expanded them to other city properties in the 1970s after government funding enabled cameras for a pilot program in the states of New York and New Jersey because of an increase in crime.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> Nestel III, Thomas J. "Using Surveillance Camera Systems to Monitor Public Domains: Can Abuse Be Prevented?" *Naval Postgraduate School* (2006): 12E, [http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/schlarly/thesis/2006/mar/06mar\\_nestel.pdf](http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/schlarly/thesis/2006/mar/06mar_nestel.pdf). [Accessed March 2006].

<sup>6</sup> Marcus Nieto, "Public Video Surveillance: Is It An Effective Crime Prevention Tool?" *California Research Bureau* (1997): 12, <http://www.library.ca.gov/CRB/97/05/crb97-005.pdf> [Accessed August 2005].

private sector, especially banks, also began using the cameras to enhance interior and perimeter security of facilities in the 1980s.<sup>7</sup>

Today, large metropolitan law enforcement agencies all over the United States use CCTV technology for specialty missions such as traffic management and counterterrorism.<sup>8</sup> The NYPD uses a powerful robotic camera on a helicopter that can zoom in two and one half miles away to read license plates and then transmit the live digital information to a flat screen television at command center miles away.<sup>9</sup>

NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly believes this ten million dollar cutting-edge technology is going to become commonplace for homeland defense.<sup>10</sup> The Europeans, especially the British, are continuing to build upon their growing CCTV technology for antiterrorism and crime fighting.<sup>11</sup> In one noted instance, CCTV captured images of the terrorists in the last moments before the bombings in the London area on July 7, 2005. Investigators used the digital recordings and physical evidence to solve the investigation; later, the recordings were shown to the jury as prime pieces of evidence.<sup>12</sup> Large American cities may be copying that methodology for their own problem areas. In 2008,

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<sup>7</sup> CoovertVideo.Com. “*The History of CCTV*” [Internet online] [http://www.covertvideo.com/history\\_of\\_cctv.htm](http://www.covertvideo.com/history_of_cctv.htm)

<sup>8</sup> *Marin Independent Journal*. “Caltrans’ new camera keeps and eye on Highway 101 traffic,” [Internet online] [http://www.marinij.com/marinnews/ci\\_11987001](http://www.marinij.com/marinnews/ci_11987001).

<sup>9</sup> *USA Today*. “Unmarked helicopter patrol NY city from high above,” [Internet online] [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-05-23-2429350972\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-05-23-2429350972_x.htm).

<sup>10</sup> *Herald Tribune*. “High-tech helicopter helps New York Police guard against terrorism attacks,” May 23, 2008, Available from <http://www.iht.com/bin/prINTERfriendly.php?id=13173779>

<sup>11</sup> *Research and Markets*. “UK CCTV Market – An Outlook (2005-2009). Available on [http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/306100/uk\\_cctv\\_market\\_an\\_outlook\\_2005\\_2009.htm](http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/306100/uk_cctv_market_an_outlook_2005_2009.htm).

<sup>12</sup> *Guardian UK.CO*. “Cameras captured true horror of July 7 bombings. Available on <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/aug/01/july7.uksecurity2>.

the Washington D.C. City government implemented a new ten million dollar security system that monitors 5,000 cameras to give officials a “broad look into school, public housing, and other sites,” with a cost savings by cutting the number security guards from the municipal sites.<sup>13</sup>

An expert panel was convened in December 2008 to study the issue of CCTV’s impact on the future of policing. The panel consisted of private sector business leaders, city government finance experts, and law enforcement professionals from Southern California – believes that the leap from security cameras being used as passive sentries for fixed locations to possibly being used to replace some of the police officers randomly patrolling is not that far away. Some Southland city councils are already taking action to replace city employees using CCTVs. The City Council of the City of La Habra, in Orange County, California, voted last May decided to research the possibility of security cameras replacing an eliminated park ranger position.<sup>14</sup> This kind of action could foreshadow what might be in store for other traditional police functions, especially during a time when the economy has descended to a point where critical safety services are being cut.

### **California in Crisis**

California law enforcement faces daunting economic challenges. The State’s ongoing structural deficits, the economic downturn, and the voters’ overwhelming

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<sup>13</sup> *The Washington Post*. “D.C. Will Centralize Security Monitoring,” [Internet online] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/09/ar2008040904048.html>.

<sup>14</sup> City Council of the City of La Habra Special Meeting Minutes, “Receive and consider the FY 08/09 Budget Presentation, and review City goals,” [Internet available] <http://lahabracity.org/images/site08/city%20clerk/city%20council%20minutes/052108ccm.pdf>.



rejection of Proposition 1A in May of this year to temporarily raise taxes on personal income and vehicles left a \$26 billion gap in the fiscal year state budget.<sup>18</sup> The approval by the legislator on July 24<sup>th</sup> had severe cuts to municipalities, around \$4.7 billion, and 180 city councils have passed resolutions threatening to sue the state according to the League of California Cities.<sup>19</sup> This is complicated by the fact that public employee unions are filing suit to retain contracted pay and benefits, even while agencies are laying off members of staff.<sup>21</sup>

No matter the final resolution, the 58 counties and almost 500 cities are almost sure to receive less revenue from the State for fiscal year budget 2009-2010, which may heavily impact the funding of sheriff and police departments. Some cities are already unable to meet their financial commitments, with rising costs of public safety wages, pensions, and health care. Some city councils in California, such as Vallejo, are requesting bankruptcy protections by filing Chapter 9 to break obligations, including employee contracts.<sup>20</sup> Other cities, like Barstow CA, tried to raise sales tax by three-

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<sup>18</sup> Christie, Jim. "California closes budget gap, worries about next," *News Daily*, July 24, 2009, [Internet online] Available from <http://www.newsdaily.com/stories/tre56m7d0-us-economy-california-budget/>.

<sup>19</sup> *Los Angeles Times*. "More than 180 California cities vow to sue state if budget is passed," [Internet available] <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/07/more-than-180-california-cities-vow-to-sue>.

<sup>21</sup> *The Mercury News*. "Teacher unions sue California for more school funds," [Internet available] [http://www.mercurynews.com/localnewsheadlines/ci\\_12328660](http://www.mercurynews.com/localnewsheadlines/ci_12328660).

<sup>20</sup> *The Wall Street Journal / Economy*. "More California Towns Face Bankruptcy," [Internet available] <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122954346309915189.html>.

quarters of a cent through a local ballot initiative to cover the cost of hiring police officers and firefighters; a move that was defeated in November last year.<sup>21</sup>

Even if such a tax were approved by the desert community, the rising salaries and retirement costs undermines such initiatives – average salary for a midlevel Barstow police officer doubled from 1999 to 2008; and the city retirement contributions increased 176.7% in the same span.<sup>22</sup> Dr. Keith Richman, a former State Assemblyman and President of the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility, believes the Three Percent at 50 California Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) is not sustainable, stating: “We have the most extravagant benefits in the nation.”<sup>23</sup>

### **An Answer - CCTV?**

The pressure to provide better security with diminishing funds continues to mount, and the evolution of CCTV technology continues to grow. Such a parallelism may entice law enforcement policy makers in California to consider expanding CCTV from beyond the use in specialty missions to everyday crime prevention uses. The ability to more efficiently provide public safety service with less money allows city councils and county boards to better manage their budgets and save face with their constituents. As an example, the City of Tustin CA, with a population of about 68,000, plans to hire less officers in the future because of security camera improvements, Tustin Chief of Police Scott Jordan says, “We're poised to reinvent the police organization and work smarter as

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<sup>21</sup> Ballot Pedia. “*Barstow sales tax increase, Measure D, 2008.*” [Internet online] [http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Barstow\\_sales\\_tax\\_increase,\\_Measure\\_D,\\_2008](http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Barstow_sales_tax_increase,_Measure_D,_2008)

<sup>22</sup> Sewell, Abby. “Police, firefighter prices goes beyond wages,” August 23, 2008 *Desert Dispatch* [Internet online] from [http://bulletin.aarp.org/states/ca/articles/police\\_firefighter\\_prices\\_goes\\_beyond\\_wages.htm?print=1](http://bulletin.aarp.org/states/ca/articles/police_firefighter_prices_goes_beyond_wages.htm?print=1).

<sup>23</sup> NPR. “California Pensions Forcing Cities Into Bankruptcy,” [Internet available] <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106689576>.

the cost of new technology comes down." The city is planning to install and monitor 67 cameras in one patrol district instead of four officers. The cameras cost only about \$300; far less than employees who might not be able to monitor the area as effectively.<sup>24</sup> In India, the City of Chennai (a community of 4.2 million) is adding 50 more cameras to their existing 27 cameras for security and traffic control, according to their director general of police. This CCTV network may, in fact, replace existing officers along the highways as part of the Police Modernization Fund.<sup>25</sup> Such automation is a possible option to help bring down law enforcement labor costs for cash strapped California communities.

### **A Possible Future for California Communities**

Policing in urban areas of California may look very different in the next decade. The use of officers driving randomly through the community neighborhoods and business districts to deter and spot crimes may be cost prohibitive. A more efficient business model may be to have fewer officers and to centralize them with CCTV being the eyes in the community.

Imagine the near-term future... at a command center, with camera operators continuously viewing monitors for criminals, the police department could be ready to quickly respond to specific types of crimes. Camera operators might see a male punch a lone women holding the hand of a small child on the street corner. Before anyone calls

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<sup>24</sup> *Orange County Register*. "Local security cameras cut crime and costs," [Internet available]

[http://www.ocregister.com/ocregister/news/local/article\\_1059645.php#](http://www.ocregister.com/ocregister/news/local/article_1059645.php#).

<sup>25</sup> *The Times of India*. "Cameras to replace police on roads," [Internet available] <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/4108799.cms>.

9-1-1 and deciphers the callers' information, the operators are downloading second-by-second, objective, reliable information into the computer aided dispatch call. Within seconds, two officers are dispatched from the Social Order Unit to handle what appears to be a domestic violence in progress, which is also equipped and trained to handle intoxications, trespassers, business and neighborhood disputes, and noise complaints. Violent calls involving weapons; such as shootings, robberies, kidnappings, and sexual assaults; would be handled by a team of officers from the Tactical Response Unit; later, sworn and civilian investigators could handle the preliminary and follow-up investigation. CCTV evolution may allow law enforcement managers to use the least amount of staff and equipment with the best fit for the mission at hand.

Although police practitioners may view this as a future with which they do not concur, how many California communities struggling to make ends meet would leap at the chance to enhance public safety through enhanced monitoring and response; while also lowering the costs to deliver that service? We may yet know that answer with the maturation of CCTV technologies on the emerging horizon.

### **Conclusion**

CCTV could continue to evolve and expand into the everyday law enforcement in California communities to the point like the United States Air Force uses radar and satellites to smartly place their assets and payloads on the battlefield with precision accuracy. CCTV may be that smart tool that allows police resources to be efficiently focused where needed, and with the fewest number of sworn officers and civilian employees. CCTV system innovations and successes might bring about acceptance of the cameras by police for everyday use in fighting crime in California communities, and

may be seen in the same light by beat cop as the addition of the radio, computer, and DNA in law enforcement. The future of CCTV is not yet determined; will it replace cops? Will it be more effective, or less so because we will lose the human touch. Only time will tell, but astute police executives should start asking the questions now.